

From the Bookshelf

Challenging the New Look By Roland Sawyer

Atomic Weapons and Armies, by F. O. Miksche.
(New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc. 222 pp. \$5.)

While this book can be read critically by a professional military man, Colonel Miksche writes so clearly that he can be understood generally by the layman. So far, few books have been published on this subject, and those outside military circles have only superficial knowledge of it. Whether or not all Colonel Miksche's contentions are valid—such as his prediction that after atomic battle the horse might provide the most effective means of transport for military forces—the colonel does stimulate his reader. At this stage when information on the subject is so scarce that is sufficient.

Although this book was published first in Britain, and is dedicated to the Portuguese army, it seems directed straight at the United States and the Eisenhower administration's "new look" military policy. That policy is the shrinking of manpower forces of the United States, particularly the Army and the Marine Corps, and the expansion of the Air Force, especially its bomber wing, the Strategic Air Command. Colonel Miksche writes:

"It is the main object of this book to prove that the general pattern of forces we require is almost the opposite of the 'new look' policy. Bigger bombs or the massive use of smaller atomic projectiles can only emphasize the basic validity of my theories—not alter them."

There is no more fundamental question today than that raised by the administration's military policy, a policy which the highest officers of the United States Army have questioned repeatedly, beginning with General Matthew B. Ridgway. Colonel Miksche does not doubt that the "new look" concept is more economical than his, which is that atomic warfare is going to require more, not less, soldiers mobilized and in uniform before the first bombs fall. In this his thinking agrees with the thinking of some of the highest American generals.

Colonel Miksche does not accept as valid the

thesis of the big bomber people, such as the Strategic Air Command, that an atomic war could be won in the air. He agrees that the air would be decisive if either side obtained complete control. But even then there would be ground battles and the conquest of the actual land areas which would require men on a scale of geometric progression, as compared to World War II.

Of course Colonel Miksche is thinking of the problem of the physical occupation of the Soviet Union, a stupendous task. He does not accept the "new look" assumption that the outcome of another major war would be decided in the first twenty-four hours. He argues that armies would survive that onslaught and is bold enough to challenge the widely but loosely accepted view that another major war would start in what Liddel Hart has called "a lunatic action" in unleashing megaton bombs.

Colonel Miksche believes that a major war would be fought with tactical atomic weapons, with armies spread over tremendous expanse. The safest place in this warfare, moreover, would not be in the rear but the forward areas — areas close to the enemy where he would not be dropping atomic bombs lest his own troops receive radiation injury from his own bombs. In these general observations, Colonel Miksche concurs with the thinking of Col. G. C. Reinhardt and Lt. Col. W. R. Kintner in their book "Atomic Weapons and Land Combat" (Military Services Publishing Company).

So far in the United States the "new look" has not been seriously or effectively challenged. Nor has the question been authoritatively threshed out in the public market place. A book such as this is an antidote to what has largely been, thus far, an argument in which the opposition (the United States generals) has been loyally silent in the public sense. The Army has gone along with the administration so far. Its only spokesmen have been the Democrats. That puts a political tinge to the discussion. Colonel Miksche writes as a professional military man, and that is the voice which is needed at this time.